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RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO 3426
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 2509
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI 7093
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI 4900
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RHMFISS/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 001947

SIPDIS
C O R R E C T E D C O P Y -- ADDED ADDRESSEES/SLUG LINES

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INS
SECDEF FOR USDP:ISA-ADMIN
JOINT STAFF FOR J2/J-5-EUR

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [PREF](#) [MOPS](#) [CE](#)
SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: MILITARY ENGAGEMENTS ON FIVE FRONTS

COLOMBO 00001947 001.3 OF 002

Classified By: CDA James R. Moore for reasons 1.4(b,d).

11. (C) Summary: Military engagements between Government of Sri Lanka (GSL) security forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) continued in the north and east on November 18-19, including a sea battle off the coast of Mannar, firing at the Jaffna Forward Defense Line, and LTTE attacks on army camps in Batticaloa. In Vavuniya, the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission ruled that security forces shot eleven students face down, killing five, after an LTTE claymore exploded near a Sri Lanka Army convoy. A police officer in Vavuniya has admitted to the killings, Human Rights Minister Samarasinghe told Charge. Meanwhile, the GSL sent a supply convoy to civilians in LTTE-controlled Vakarai November 19, and announced plans to open temporarily the A9 highway to send food aid to Jaffna (septel). End Summary.

VAKARAI

12. (C) The security environment for about 30,000 civilians in the eastern coastal area of Vakarai, in a Tamil Tigers- (LTTE) controlled area of Batticaloa district, deteriorated over the weekend as the LTTE and Government of Sri Lanka (GSL) security forces exchanged fire. (Note: Internally displaced persons (IDPs) from Trincomalee fled to Vakarai in the midst of military engagement between the LTTE and GSL military in July.) On November 5, security forces closed the road to Vakarai at Valachchenai because of fighting in the area, exacerbating already dire food shortages. Civilian sources have complained to us that the LTTE has not allowed civilians to leave Vakarai, while those who do manage to enter GSL-controlled areas to procure food and supplies are prevented by the security forces from returning to Vakarai. We have reports that the 300-600 LTTE cadres in the area are demoralized, sitting in flooded trenches, and are short of

food. Some have reportedly surrendered.

13. (C) On November 16, LTTE-proxy Tamil National Alliance (TNA) members of parliament R. Sampanthan and Gajendrakumar Ponnambalam met with President Rajapaksa to demand access for humanitarian supplies, stating that no food had reached civilians in Vakarai since the road was closed. On November 17, the GSL sent ten truckloads of food supplies toward Vakarai, but security forces claiming that Defense Ministry authorization had not been received turned the convoy back. According to media reports, looters then raided some of the trucks. On November 19, the convoy was permitted to proceed to Vakarai.

JAFFNA

14. (C) The bodies of two ethnic Tamils were discovered November 18 in Jaffna with severe knife wounds. The pro-LTTE Tamilnet website accused the Sri Lankan Army, but the military denied any involvement. As periodic fire continued from both sides of the Jaffna Forward Defense Line (FDL) over the weekend, the Government of Sri Lanka announced it would open the A9 highway connecting the Jaffna peninsula to the south through the LTTE-controlled Vanni for a one-time shipment of supplies. (Septel will report a November 20 briefing by the GSL Peace Secretariat on the temporary A-9 opening.) The LTTE rejected the plan November 20, insisting the road must be permanently opened.

BATTICALOA

15. (C) Sri Lanka Military spokesman Brigadier Prasad Samarasinghe told pol FSN that the LTTE attacked Sri Lanka Army (SLA) camps at Kadjuwatte, Vavunathivu and Mankerni in the Batticaloa district November 19 with artillery and mortar fire, injuring two soldiers. SLA troops returned fire.

VAVUNIYA

16. (C) Brigadier Samarasinghe told pol FSN that an LTTE claymore attack on a military supply truck November 18 killed four soldiers, and that several civilians were killed in the

COLOMBO 00001947 002.2 OF 002

ensuing crossfire. On November 20, Minister of Disaster Management and Human Rights Mahinda Samarasinghe told Charge that a Vavuniya policeman had come forward to accept responsibility for the killing of the students. He said he was near the army checkpoint when the claymore went off and, panicking, fired on the students, killing five. Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission spokesperson Helen Olafsdottir told Emboff, however, that monitors who arrived at the scene within 10 minutes of the incident found that "soldiers fired indiscriminately at a group of students who had thrown themselves on the ground seeking safety" after the claymore exploded near by. Olafsdottir added that witnesses saw soldiers enter the agricultural school premises and open fire at close range on the students, who were lying face down. Five were killed and another 10 injured.

MANNAR

17. (C) The LTTE "Sea Tigers" and the Sri Lanka Navy (SLN) clashed off the north-west coast of Mannar November 18. Latest reports indicate that the SLN detected a Sea Tiger resupply effort, setting off the exchange. Military spokesman Brig. Samarasinghe confirmed that one sailor was killed and three were injured, and claimed that the SLN killed 15 LTTE cadres. He said the SLN sunk three Sea Tiger boats while the Sri Lanka Air Force (SLAF) sunk one. The LTTE claimed to have sunk two naval boats, killing ten sailors. (Note: Both sides frequently inflate casualty

numbers.)

18. (C) COMMENT: While the weekend's events reflect an undiminished level of violence since the last round in of talks in Geneva at the end of October, they do not amount to the major LTTE strike that many observers have anticipated before LTTE supremo Prabhakaran's annual November 27 "Heroes' Day" speech.
BLAKE